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SUBJECT: INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS CHALLENGE MEDIA
CONTROL LAW

- ¶1. Journalists working for the privately owned media in Zimbabwe have filed an urgent application with the Supreme Court of Zimbabwe to challenge certain sections of the controversial Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). Lawyers representing the Independent Journalists Association of Zimbabwe (IJAZ) describe the Act as a "sudden leap into autocracy." The legal challenge focuses on those sections of the Act that require journalists to register with the government, and that prescribe penalties (up to two years in prison) for "abuse of journalistic privilege" and "publishing falsehoods."
- ¶2. Under AIPPA, all journalists and privately owned media organizations are required to register with the government by October 31, 2002. State-owned media organizations are exempted from this requirement. Consensus among the independent media is that the organizations will register, but individual journalists will not. This opens the possibility that journalists working for the privately owned media could be arrested on November 1. The legal challenge brought by IJAZ is partially intended to relieve that threat.

SULLIVAN